

SHARING THE KNOWLEDGE: THE DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE
OF INDIGENOUS FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
AND WASHINGTON

Cassie Halls

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Abstract

Food sovereignty is defined as a universal right to have control over the source and content of one's sustenance. The principles of food sovereignty are integral to Canadian First Nations and Native American tribe's health, wellness, economic stability, and environmental consciousness. Cross-cultural knowledge sharing has been instrumental between native and non-native communities in defining food sovereignty. Here I address how the discourse and practice of food sovereignty has influenced the efforts of Native communities to reestablish their traditional food systems, and what role cross-cultural, participatory engagement and political alliance has within the food sovereignty movement. I argue that food sovereignty is a spatial and epistemological "contact zone" with points of commonality and contention. Through cross-cultural ethnographic accounts of scholars engaged with food sovereignty in Washington and Canada, I compile case studies of allyship and mentorship within specific communities. I develop guiding principles for "relational thinking" across boundaries of culture and ways of knowing. This response provides opportunities for productive and meaningful partnerships as well as ways to redefine and decolonize the language of the Food Sovereignty movement.

Introduction

There is a wealth of knowledge, values and wisdom to share: We hope to engage in activities and policy creation that is not “about” Indigenous peoples’ food systems but learns from and is informed by the experiences and expertise gained through many millennia of practice [of Indigenous peoples]

-People’s Food Policy Project, “First Principles Protocol for Building Cross Cultural Relationships,” 2009

Maryam Rahmanian and Michael Pimbert, in an editorial of the Nyéléni newsletter, an international forum for food sovereignty, state that a radical transform of dominant knowledge and ways of knowing needs to occur within the Food Sovereignty movement.¹ Pimbert and Rahmanian argue that this change can only occur through cross-cultural dialogue that gives room for “multiple perspectives and multiple cosmovisions” within the discourse of food sovereignty.² This paper focuses on how cross-cultural sharing manifests itself within diverse groups of the Food Sovereignty movement, and how this knowledge sharing contributes to and complicates Indigenous³ revitalization of traditional food systems within Washington and British Columbia. It is important to note that the diverse traditional food systems of Indigenous peoples within these regions are closely intertwined. Pre-contact trade networks such as those known as the “Grease Trails”⁴ ran through what we know today as British Columbia to as far as the territory

¹ Maryam Rahmanian and Michel Pimbert, “Editorial: Creating Knowledge for Food Sovereignty”. *Nyéleni Newsletter*, 18 (2014): 1

² Ibid.

³ For fluidity, I will be using Indigenous to refer to native communities in both British Columbia and Washington. I also choose to use the term “Indigenous” because it is a universal, political stance that is nationally and internationally recognized.

⁴ The name “Grease Trails” originates from the vast amount of oil being traded up and down the coast, primarily from Oolichan, also known as *Thaleichthys pacificus* or smelt, as described by Maryam Hirsch, “Trading across time and space: Culture along the North American “Grease Trails” from a European perspective”, 1-2

known as Alaska.⁵ These Northwest Coast communities were interconnected in ways even beyond the Grease trails, thus it is beneficial to consider points of intersection within these regions' contemporary efforts for food sovereignty.

Within cross-cultural dialogue of the Food Sovereignty movement, one can confront instances of both commonality and contention.⁶ The framework I employ for theorizing this critical dialogue is Mary Louise Pratt's concept of the "contact zone."⁷ Pratt refers to contact zones as the "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power."⁸ Within the contact zone of food sovereignty, Indigenous people are rarely considered within the general literature on this movement⁹. These voices, if given consideration, provide gateways into different ways of knowing which enhance our collective understanding of food sovereignty. The first section of this paper focuses on this epistemological contact zone, focusing primarily on how these different ways of knowing are presented within the discourse of food sovereignty. I use the term political allyship to refer to cross-cultural partnership for the aim of policy and legislative reform within the Food Sovereignty movement. This section concludes with an examination of how, if we think critically about what it means to build successful alliances,¹⁰ political allyship can be an

⁵ Mirjam Hirsch, "Trading across Time and Space: Culture along the North American 'Grease Trails' from a European Perspective." *Canadian Studies International Interdisciplinary Conference*. University College of the Cariboo, Kamloops, Sept 12-14, 2003. Accessed August 1st, 2014
http://cdn6.iitc.org/wpcontent/uploads/FoodSovereigntyENG_102209WEB.pdf?217bb7

⁶ The idea to focus on "commonalities and contentions" came from the British Columbia Food Systems Network 2014 Gathering, from a session on cross-cultural dialogue that Dawn Morrison moderated; thus, this language is her own.

⁷ Mary Louise Pratt, "The Art of the Contact Zone" *Profession 91*. (New York, 1991) 33.

⁸ *Ibid*, 34.

⁹ Michelle Daigle, interviewed by Cassie Halls, Seattle, WA, June 15, 2014. Personal correspondence quotes with Daigle can be found in Section 2.2, and the full interview transcript on pp. 26-36

¹⁰ Maryam Rahmanian. "Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue" (video presentation from the Food Sovereignty Colloquium 2013, Yale University, Connecticut, September 14-15, 2013)

opportunity for relational thinking. This relational thinking can allow for meaningful change through decolonizing research and relationships of the Food Sovereignty movement.¹¹

In Section Two, I discuss the spatial dimension of the contact zone, particularly how shared geographies and differences in land based practices create tension within the Food Sovereignty movement. I situate my argument in land-based practices from within Native communities by using the work of scholars such as Charlotte Cote (Nu-chah-nuulth) and Dawn Morrison (Secwepemc). Lastly, I navigate the role of participatory mentorship within food sovereignty, particularly within the context of British Columbia and Washington. I use the term participatory mentorship to refer to physical engagement with traditional land-based practices. Case studies of cross-cultural mentorship are provided through my own practice as well as through an ethnographic interview with Michelle Daigle, who is Cree and is pursuing her PhD in Geography at the University of Washington. Daigle is involved with food sovereignty in both Canada and Washington, and quotes from our interview are interwoven into this section. I conclude with a discussion of the importance of adhering to Indigenous values of reciprocity, reflexivity and relational thinking when researching and participating in food sovereignty.

Section 1: The Discourse of Food Sovereignty

Food sovereignty as a key term originated with *La Via Campesina* from an international coalition meeting in Tlaxcala, Mexico in 1996.¹² *La Via Campesina* is a widespread, transnational agrarian movement that began mobilizing in 1993 for the universal human rights of

¹¹ Rahmanian, Maryam and Michel Pimbert. "Editorial: Creating Knowledge for Food Sovereignty." *Nyéleni Newsletter*, 18 (2014): 2

¹² Hannah Wittman. "Food Sovereignty: A New Rights Framework for Food and Nature?" *Environment and Society: Advances in Research* 2 (2011): 87–105. doi:10.3167/ares.2011.020106

peasants to have agency over their food system.¹³ In its origins, food sovereignty fought against the globalizing forces that transformed agricultural systems into a neoliberal, industrial, capital-intensive, and corporate-led model.¹⁴ Beginning with LVC, Food sovereignty has focused on deconstructing dominant, universal dialogues and unequal power dynamics around our food system. The most comprehensive and relevant universal definition of Indigenous peoples' right to food comes from the Declaration of Atitlán, which was drafted at the First Indigenous Peoples' Global Consultation on the Right to Food in 2002 in Guatemala: "Food Sovereignty is the right of Peoples to define their own policies and strategies for sustainable production, distribution, and consumption of food, with respect to their own cultures and their own systems of managing natural resources and rural areas."¹⁵ This declaration by the United Nations supports Indigenous peoples' right to control their food systems and allows for specific rights and responsibilities to be defined by Indigenous peoples.

Food sovereignty, in its definitions and origins, is a product of cross-cultural dialogue. Not only is this dialogue the domain of academics and global organizations, but Indigenous communities themselves. Unlike the efforts of the Green Revolution for improving food security, the principles of Food Sovereignty are moving away from using external solutions for internal problems. The Food Sovereignty Movement recognizes the importance for internal, community-sourced solutions for issues such as environmental degradation and food insecurity. Raj Patel refers to the interdependency between food sovereignty and food security; calling "food

¹³ Hannah Wittman, Annette Desmarais and Nettie Wiebe. "The Origins and Potential of Food Sovereignty." *Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature, and Community*. (Halifax : Fernwood, 2010) 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 2.

¹⁵ "Cultural Indicators for Food Sovereignty, Food Security and Sustainable Development." last modified October 2009. http://cdn6.iitc.org/wp-content/uploads/FoodSovereigntyENG_102209WEB.pdf?217bb7

sovereignty as a precondition of genuine food security.”¹⁶ Thus, global food security must be acted out first through grassroots, community-based efforts for food sovereignty.

Yet one can complicate this universal rights discourse of food sovereignty. Within the contact zone of food sovereignty, the rights discourse provides only one perspective within the debate. Patel situates Food Sovereignty in the language of “rights”, and dichotomizes individual and collective aims:

If we talk about food sovereignty, we talk about rights, and if we do that, we must talk about ways to ensure that those rights are met, across a range of geographies, by everyone, in substantive and meaningful ways. In taking this line, I am clear that I come down on one side of a broader series of debates on the tension between individual and collective human rights, arguing that in cases where group rights threaten individual ones, individual ones ought to trump.¹⁷

There are many critics of the rights discourse that is used by Patel in this quote. Jeff Corntassel,¹⁸ a Cherokee scholar, argues that for Indigenous peoples, food sovereignty is better described through responsibilities than rights. He argues that the rights discourse is a Western concept that is in contention with an Indigenous perspective of the land. One can argue that Patel also employs false dichotomies of individual versus collective, which is in contention with general Indigenous worldviews. Daigle, within her Anishinaabe and Cree community, sees herself as responsible to not just herself, but her immediate family, extended family, clan, tribal community, and environment.¹⁹ In line with these Indigenous values of the interdependency of

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Raj Patel. “What does food sovereignty look like?” *Journal of Peasant Studies*. 36 (2009) 671. Accessed August 4th 2014. doi: 10.1080/0306615090314307

¹⁸ Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee Nation) is associate professor at the Indigenous Governance program at the University of British Columbia thus is another regional voice

¹⁹ Daigle, Interview

self and collective, Corntassel defines food sovereignty through a new framework, which he calls “Sustainable Self-Determination.”²⁰ In this new framework, he argues that:

Decolonizing praxis comes from moving beyond political awareness and/or symbolic gestures to everyday practices of resurgence. This shift means rejecting the performativity of a rights discourse geared toward state affirmation and recognition, and embracing a daily existence conditioned by place-based cultural practices.²¹

Corntassel asks for something more robust than the “symbolic gesture” of the rights discourse. The performativity of the rights discourse, Corntassel argues, is not helping indigenous peoples but rather affirming the public policy of governments. What truly makes food sovereignty is the cultivation of “a daily existence conditioned by place-based cultural practices.”²²

Dawn Morrison,²³ a Vancouver-based Secwepemc scholar argues that food sovereignty is both much broader and much older than its contemporary definitions. She argues that although the term Food Sovereignty is quite new, principles of food sovereignty have been known by indigenous peoples for many centuries:²⁴

Indigenous food sovereignty describes, rather than defines, the present day strategies that enable and support the ability of Indigenous communities to sustain traditional hunting, fishing, gathering, farming and distribution practices, the way we have done for thousands of years prior to contact with the first European settlers ... We have rejected a formal universal definition of sovereignty in favour of one that respects the sovereign rights and power of each distinct nation to identify the characteristics of our cultures and what it means to be Indigenous.²⁵

²⁰ Jeff Corntassel. “Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*.1:1 (2012): 86-101 Accessed July 19th, 2014. <http://decolonization.org/index.php/des/article/view/18627>

²¹ Ibid, 89

²² Ibid.

²³ Dawn Morrison is on the board of the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS) in British Columbia

²⁴ Dawn Morrison. “Indigenous food sovereignty – A model for social learning.” In *Food Sovereignty in Canada: Creating Just and Sustainable Food Systems*. ed. H. Wittman, A.A. Desmarais and N. Wiebe. (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2011) 97.

²⁵ Ibid, 97-98.

Morrison creates a major difference in terminology between what she calls “food sovereignty” “Indigenous food sovereignty.” Morrison contends that the long-term presence and existence of Indigenous peoples has not been recognized and honored in the dominant literature on food sovereignty. For instance, archeological data from West Point in Seattle identifies over three hundred different types of traditional foods eaten by Coast Salish peoples²⁶. All contemporary aims for local and sustainable food fall short of the impressive gastronomical history of Indigenous peoples, especially the Salish bounty²⁷ of the Northwest Coastal tribes. Indigenous peoples around the world have been practicing what has recently been labeled Food Sovereignty since time immemorial. Another lesson we can learn from Indigenous scholars such as Morrison is that food systems are integral to the existence of Indigenous peoples. Morrison argues that traditional food systems are inextricably connected to collective identity of “what it means to be Indigenous.”²⁸ The Food Sovereignty movement can hardly begin to define Indigenous existence as a whole. As Michelle Daigle says, “the term food sovereignty can only be a signal.” She reframes food sovereignty within the community she is working with, which is the Treaty Number Three Anishinaabe community. By working with the Treaty Number Three Anishinaabe Daigle finds that the Anishinaabe translate Food Sovereignty as *Mino-bimaadiziwin* which essentially means “living the good life.”²⁹

Political Allyship

I originally set out on this research as a means to better understand how alliances can be built successfully, especially between academics and communities. I wanted to articulate that if I

²⁶ This data comes from the Burke Museum Salish Bounty digital exhibition, a community led project that archived the foods found in ancient middens of West Point, Seattle. Listed on the Burke Museum website at http://www.burkemuseum.org/salish_bounty

²⁷ Ibid. This is the name of the exhibition itself; “Salish Bounty” is a digital exhibition on Coast Salish traditional foods

²⁸ Morrison, *Indigenous Food Sovereignty*, 97.

²⁹ Daigle, Interview

were going to do community-based research, I would have some guiding principles on doing it well. I also hoped to provide a framework for others to think critically about their role as an ally. In a video by Maryam Rahmanian, she states that in order to build alliances well, we need to be “constantly asking ourselves how [we] know if we are doing it well.”³⁰ Rahmanian’s statement opens up the discussion of alliance-building to question our own authoritative voice and way of knowing within this process. I understand that my cultural basis for knowledge production influences both my research and my alliances. I understand that as a non-Native person I cannot represent food sovereignty from an Indigenous perspective, nor is this my intention. What I attempt is to develop principles for assessing successful dialogue in instances of cross-cultural allyship.

In June 2014 I attended a conference in the Sorrento, British Columbia called the British Columbia Food System Network (BCFSN) Gathering. One of the sessions focused on cross-cultural dialogue and was led by the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty (WGIFS). As part of this session, Dawn Morrison and other elders facilitated a discussion on what food sovereignty means for Indigenous peoples of the region. Morrison led a discussion about points of contention and commonality within food sovereignty.³¹ Many of the participants focused on the recent legislative changes in the Agricultural Land Reserves (ALR’s) of British Columbia.³² Yet Morrison, as a representative of an Indigenous perspective, talked about how even the ALR’s in their conception, by protecting farmland and not protecting traditional gathering grounds, were fundamentally inhibiting First Nations food sovereignty. The small farmers in the discussion will probably continue to fight for the ALR’s, obstructing First Nations networks and

³⁰ Rahmanian, *Food Sovereignty*

³¹ This was Dawn Morrison’s framework for cross-cultural dialogue, and has been a guide for this research

³² For more on the Agricultural Land Reserves recent legislative changes in British Columbia, go to <http://farmlandprotection.ca/alr-101/>

lifeways. Morrison bridged the gap by outlining similar aims and ideals from each perspective on the basis of partnership. She articulated to the small farmers that ALR's occupied ceded land that that Indigenous peoples have been trying to reclaim for generations.

Allyship becomes problematic in instances of land disputes and contrasting personal agencies. Despite this, what Morrison achieved at the end of the session were alliances through what Marisol de la Cadena refers to as “equivocation.”³³ According to de la Cadena: “as [a] mode of communication, equivocations emerge when different perspectival positions—views from different worlds, rather than perspectives about the same world—use homonymical terms to refer to things that are not the same.”³⁴ De la Cadena's argument is contextualized within her focus of Andean cosmopolitics, however there are many applications of this dialogue within food sovereignty. Food Sovereignty is a term used by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, who may ally together but have contrasting political aims and practices. I argue that what de la Cadena calls “different perspectival positions”, or even “cosmovisions”³⁵ can be found within these entirely different perspectives on food sovereignty. De la Cadena also articulates how shared geographies and differences in spatial practices can be recognized within political allyship. De la Cadena maintains that “land” as a term is an equivocation: “[land] was the homonymical term that allowed two partially connected worlds to fight jointly for the same territory.”³⁶ In de la Cadena's argument, both environmental parties and Quechua individuals are using the term “land” for very different aims. The Quechua individuals wanted to protect their

³³ Marisol de la Cadena. “Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond ‘Politics’”. *Cultural Anthropology*: 334-70.

³⁴ De la Cadena, *Indigenous Cosmopolitics* 350

³⁵ Rahmanian, *Editorial: Creating Knowledge*, 1

³⁶ De la Cadena, *Indigenous Cosmopolitics*, 356

cultural, spiritual, and economic connections to the “land”³⁷ while environmentalists had an entirely different conceptualization of why they should protect the land, i.e. for maintaining biodiversity. The term food sovereignty can serve the same kind of unifying purpose. Thus, if used correctly, equivocation can be a tool to unite Indigenous and non-Indigenous political agendas and build partnerships over a common cause.

In a counter argument, when food sovereignty is used as an equivocation for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous activists, the term can lose its specific context and meaning. Michelle Daigle argues that much of the literature on food sovereignty is globalized and market-oriented.³⁸ Another risk of political equivocation is what Charles Hale refers to as a “multicultural menace.” Hale argues that in Latin America, policies that intend to enhance multiculturalism are in reality masked assimilation. He maintains that this “support for limited versions of multicultural rights on the part of powerful neoliberal institutions is not the exception, but rather the rule.”³⁹ Rather than supporting the full rights of Indigenous peoples, there is a strong tendency for the allotment of limited rights which give the appearance, rather than the reality, of multicultural inclusion. Similar policies of multiculturalism have also been implemented in Canada and are often challenged by First Nations.

There are many challenges to navigate within political allyship. More often than not, there will be guides and mentors who will lead others through the difficulties of alliance building. These guides are the Indigenous community members who are willing to engage in cross-cultural dialogue. The principles I’ve developed for successful cross-cultural dialogue

³⁷ De la Cadena argues that the connection is more to respect “earth-beings” than to what one would normally conceptualize as “land”

³⁸ Daigle, Interview

³⁹ Charles Hale. “Does Multiculturalism Menace? Governance, Cultural Rights and the Politics of Identity in Guatemala”. *Journal of Latin American Studies*. (Cambridge: University Press, 34:3, 2002), 521

include self-reflexivity, such as the continual questioning of one's own methods and agency; as well as reciprocity and relational thinking. If these lessons are self-actualized, and if one maintains long-term allyship, there can be much strength to cross-cultural dialogue and alliance-building.

Section 2: The Spatial Practices of Food Sovereignty

While there has been much discussion and theorizing on food sovereignty, there is little discussion in general literature on how food sovereignty can be situated in specific geographies and land based practices.⁴⁰ These spatial definitions are what give food sovereignty meaning and cultural relativity. In an excerpt from an interview with Michelle Daigle, she argues that definitions of food sovereignty are dependent on place-based culture and lifeways:

What food sovereignty is going to look like in say, Bolivia, is going to be different for Anishinaabe people, in say, Treaty Three territories. Not to say that there isn't something to be learned from both experiences that could perhaps be incorporated in culturally relevant ways but there are all these things you have to consider. First and foremost, you have to consider the culture that's there.⁴¹

Since this paper focuses on contemporary food sovereignty efforts in British Columbia and Washington, it is important to recognize the rich cultural-food systems of these regions. I would hesitate extrapolating my site-based analysis to the larger spatial practices of food sovereignty, due to this cultural relativity that Daigle discusses. Daigle also argues that we need to respect and honor the Indigenous knowledges that these communities hold that are deeply scientific:

Another thing is honoring our highly sophisticated indigenous science that exists in our community. There are people within our communities that have an intimate, very intimate relationship with the land since they were very young. They were six, seven years old going out on the trap line with their dads, brothers,

⁴⁰ Daigle, Interview

⁴¹ Ibid.

sisters, grandpas, grandmas, uncles and aunties, this is something they have done their whole lives...it was very obvious to me that they have this intimate knowledge of the ecosystem.⁴²

The majority of literature on food sovereignty does not acknowledge these sophisticated, scientific land-based practices of Indigenous peoples. These practices are deeply rooted in what we now call sustainability, ecological awareness and the enhancement of biodiversity; yet the food sovereignty community does not consider these knowledges as scientifically valid. Nancy J. Turner, a Victoria-based ethnoecologist, gives some concrete examples some of the ways traditional knowledges could contribute to the Food Sovereignty movement:

Indigenous knowledge can be applied to environmental protection, for example in protecting and conserving genetic resources of nutritious and pest-resistant crop varieties (cultivars and landraces), and in providing practical and effective strategies for sustaining crops, fish, wildlife, forest ecosystems, agroecosystems and other essential habitats. Indigenous worldviews can help other societies by creating a new ethic of respect for other life forms and other cultures.⁴³

Too often in partnerships of traditional knowledge holders and academic scientists, there are uneven power dynamics between what is esteemed and what is “unrecognized” knowledge. In order to enter into a true dialogue,⁴⁴ academics need to understand the lesson of cultural humility. When true cross-cultural dialogue can occur, this knowledge sharing can provide solutions and methodologies for actualizing food sovereignty.

To honor the spatial practices of food sovereignty within British Columbia and Washington, one must first be able to recognize them. Within anthropology of the Pacific

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Nancy J. Turner, Mark Plotkin and Harriet V. Kuhnlein. “Global Environmental Challenges to the Integrity of Indigenous Peoples’ Food Systems.” *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Centre for Indigenous Peoples’ Nutrition and Environment* (2013), 26. Accessed August 2, 2014.

⁴⁴ Daigle, Interview

Northwest, there has been a longstanding failure to recognize the sophisticated land-based⁴⁵ practices of Indigenous peoples.⁴⁶ It is not within the scope of this paper to articulate all the land and water-based practices of First Nations of these two regions. I choose to highlight a few practices integral to the cultures of this place. Charlotte Cote (Nu-chah-nuulth) in her book “Spirit of Our Whaling Ancestors” discusses the complex nature of Nu-chah-nuulth and Makah whaling practices, both contemporarily and historically:

Reviving our whaling tradition has cultural, social, and spiritual significance and will reaffirm our identities as whaling people, enriching and strengthening our communities by reinforcing a sense of cultural pride. Historically, whaling served important social, subsistence, and ritual functions that were at the core of our societies...stories contained within our oral traditions that have been passed down through generations tell of the great Thunderbird, T’iick’in, and how he brought the whale, *ihtuup*, to our people to feast on.⁴⁷

One can see that these whaling practices are intertwined with spiritual, cultural, political, and economic aspects of Nu-chah-nuulth and Makah lifeways. Cote sees the loss of these subsistence practices equivalent to the loss of her Nu-chah-nuulth culture. There are efforts within the food sovereignty literature to compartmentalize and study food sovereignty as a distinct entity, but for Indigenous peoples you cannot disentangle food sovereignty from the amalgam of spiritual, cultural, and economic livelihood. Efforts such as the Makah return to whaling have led to much controversy and legal debate, further showing how politically entangled food sovereignty can be.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ And of course, for the Pacific Northwest, land-based practices are deeply entrenched with water-based practices

⁴⁶ “Reconstructing Indigenous Resource Management, Reconstructing the History of an Idea”: *Keeping it Living: Traditions of Plant Use and Cultivation on the Northwest Coast of North America*. eds. Douglas Deur, Nancy J Turner. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005) 3-8.

⁴⁷ Cote,Charlotte. “*Spirit of Our Whaling Ancestors: Revitalizing Makah and Nu-chah-nuulth Traditions*” 6

⁴⁸ There has been a lot of division even within the Makah community on the ethics returning to whaling. A contrary opinion is provided by Greta Gaard’s in her article “Tools for a Cross-Cultural Feminist Ethics: Exploring Ethical Contexts and Contents in the Makah Whale Hunt” in *Hypatia* 16:1 (2001) 1-26

Within this spatial contact zone there needs to be recognition of not only Indigenous land-based practices, but also other practices that occur on these shared territories. Industrial agriculture and non-Indigenous settlements can result in dispossession that threatens the existence of these land-based practices and the people who perform them. Secwepemc scholar Dawn Morrison provides us with a regional example:

The highest levels of agricultural production in the mainstream economy [of British Columbia] take place on areas that were once important traditional harvesting sites. For example, non-Indigenous agricultural settlements in B.C. are concentrated on fertile valley bottoms in the Fraser Valley and central interior regions, displacing traditional berry-picking and hunting grounds and decimating elk and other wildlife populations. Much of the agricultural activities in the mainstream economy have also contaminated waterways that are an important habitat for salmon: they have led to decreased water supplies for local communities as a result of the removal of native vegetation, modification of drainage and contamination by agricultural fertilizers and pesticides.⁴⁹

Although this is a case example for British Columbia, there are applications everywhere, including what is known as the Puget Basin in Washington. The settlement of Seattle, which is located within the fertile basin of the Puget Sound, has resulted in the pollution of waterways such as the Duwamish River as well as displacement of ancestral peoples from their lands to reservations such as Muckleshoot and Snohomish. At the time of European contact, large beds of Wapato grew around the banks of Lake Washington, prairie beds of Camas were cultivated on the high point of Seattle on Beacon Hill, and large clam-beds were maintained on the mouth of the estuary at what is now the Pioneer Square district.⁵⁰ These local examples illustrate the impact caused by unequal sharing of land between settler populations and Native communities. Unequal sharing of land is in many ways, an insurmountable point of contention within the contact zone of food sovereignty. Maryam Rahmanian argues that through cross-cultural

⁴⁹ Morrison, *Indigenous Food Sovereignty*, 99.

⁵⁰ Coll Thrush. *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-over Place*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007)

dialogue, we can find ways to address points of internal contention within allyship around food sovereignty. One solution that has come from Indigenous communities is the creation of alternative, tribal-owned economies. This has been an overarching goal of Indigenous peoples with the revitalization of these foodways, as the creation of alternative economies is a means to attain greater economic and cultural self-determination.

Participatory Mentorship

Participatory mentorship is an active form engagement in revitalizing traditional food practices such as hunting, fishing, gathering, and cultivating the wild. This mentorship can occur from generation to generation within a culture, or can even cross cultural boundaries in situations of non-Native mentorship. I use a non-traditional method of defining mentorship: rather than following the “banking” model of education⁵¹ where knowledge is a hierarchical transfer from the teacher to the student. Mentorship in this instance means the interconnected network of learning, which is non-hierarchical, cyclical and inter-generational. This model of mentorship reflects Native American pedagogies⁵² that have been used for millennia.

The spatial practices of food sovereignty are rooted in everyday existence. The pedagogy of land-based practices can be another form of cross-cultural dialogue that allows for knowledge sharing within the Food Sovereignty movement. Some of these “everyday acts of resurgence”⁵³ are easily translatable across culture and improve the health and livelihood of all. Valerie Segrest, a Muckleshoot scholar and nutritionist, states the importance of everyday action outlined within her “traditional food principles” of the Coast Salish food system. Segrest’s principles are

⁵¹ Paulo Freire. "The Banking Concept of Education." In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (30th Anniversary ed. New York: Continuum 2000), 1.

⁵² For a resource on Native American pedagogy, see Lawrence W. Gross's article "Some Elements of American Indian Pedagogy from an Anishinaabe Perspective". *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*. (34:2, Los Angeles: American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 2006) 11-26.

⁵³ Corntassel, *Sustainable Self-Determination* page 89

1.) *Food is at the Center of Culture*, 2.) *Honor the Food Web*, 3.) *Eat with the Seasons*, 4.) *Eat a Variety of Foods*, 5.) *Traditional Foods are Whole Foods*, 6.) *Eat Local Foods*, 7.) *Wild and Organic foods are better for health*, and 8.) *Cook and Eat with Good Intention*.⁵⁴ All of these principles are tangible to achieve through small action, and honor the spiritual and cultural aspects of traditional foods. As a nutritionist, Segrest also stresses the importance of traditional foods on health and wellbeing, and sees the incorporation of these traditional foods as important for overcoming high rates of diabetes, obesity and other chronic diseases within tribal communities.⁵⁵ Within my own participatory mentorship, the most valuable lesson I've learned is that educating oneself about Indigenous land-based practices can cause a shift in perspective and action.

The case studies for this section are interviews with Michelle Daigle and conversations I have had with my mentor, Polly Olsen. The full transcript of my interview⁵⁶ with Michelle Daigle serves as an example of cross-cultural dialogue. In my interview with Michelle Daigle, I focus on her role within the Food Sovereignty movement as well as her guiding principles for respectful partnership. Daigle is Cree and a graduate student at the University of Washington, pursuing a PhD in Geography. In her own community, Michelle is continually mentored through participating in traditional land-based practices, such as beaver trapping.

Stories provide a space for cross-cultural dialogue that can engage us through affect⁵⁷. This emotional response allows for relational thinking. A cultural teaching I have received came from my mentor Polly, about the First Foods. I was peeling bitterroots at a table with two of my

⁵⁴ Valerie Segrest and Elise Krohn. "Revitalizing Northwest Coastal Indian Food Culture." *Feeding the People, Feeding the Spirit: Revitalizing Northwest Coastal Indian Food Culture*. (1st ed. N.p.: n.p., 2010) 33-37

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 33.

⁵⁶ See pages 26-36 for interview transcript

⁵⁷ See anecdotal notes in postscript, page 37

peers and Polly, when she was telling us stories about bitterroot from her community. Bitterroot or *Piaxi*⁵⁸ is honored during the First Foods Ceremony. As I rolled the thin outer layer off with my fingers, thin creamy white tendrils of taproot curled softly out. Polly told us the story of the first foods, how once plants and animals had human forms. The story goes that when people were first created, the creator told the plant and animal beings that these humans were very foolish and that they didn't know how to care for themselves. The Creator asked for the plants and animals to help care for these foolish people. Bitterroot was the first one to step up and offer herself to the people. One by one, plants and animals began offering to give themselves to the humans every year. Since bitterroot was the first to give herself to the people, she is one of the first foods that are ready to be harvested every year, in early spring. The Yakama go in ceremony and collect these taproots before their bright white flowers dot the hillsides, because they are most nutritious when harvested before bloom. Learning this story made me appreciate these small tight fists of roots as I peeled them. This story held many things; lessons of reciprocity and relational thinking between plants and people, as well as ecological teachings on when and how to harvest bitterroot.

Michelle Daigle, in my interview with her, shared some of the principles and protocols she follows within her community:

Well, I always offer people tobacco whenever I ask them something. The tobacco offering signifies that I am accepting a responsibility by asking an Elder or Knowledge Holder for help and insight. In that exchange I am saying that I will carry that knowledge and share in a respectful way and reflect on how I can embody that teaching in my life. I always just try to practice my aural skills, and my patience. The teaching of patience has been the more difficult one for me...the academic process doesn't always allow for that. Also, I feel I've been committed

⁵⁸ *Lewisia rediviva Pursh*, Bitterroot or *Piaxi* is a small, low perennial with a fleshy taproot and pink to white flowers. The taproot of the bitterroot is peeled and eaten fresh or cooked. *Piaxi* grows abundantly on the east side of Washington, and is a very important food for the Yakama. For more information see the USDA Plants Database entry on Bitterroot: <http://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=LERE7>

to incorporating the language in order to be as true to knowledge that comes from my community or other communities that have been shared with me. This goes back to classic anthropology, but I see it now from contemporary non-Indigenous scholars, where that knowledge is not being honored, because it's sometimes being fit to another framework or a theory. Not to say that those two cannot come into conversation, but what I strive for is to create more of a dialogue than to make indigenous knowledge fit into something that has already been recognized, or is considered esteemed knowledge. And it's really difficult, it's a constant struggle for me...but it's something that I'm committed to doing in my work.⁵⁹

Both in her physical presence and in her writing, Daigle adheres to principles for respecting people within her community and in other communities. Through gift giving, she is able to create reciprocal relationships with those whom share their teachings. In her academic work, Daigle adheres to principles of respect in order to not misappropriate traditional knowledges. Daigle admits to the difficulty and struggle of trying to be respectful as a researcher, and says that there will also be constraints and demands within academic work that will challenge one's ability to be respectful.

Conclusion

Against ideas that food sovereignty can be understood through universal and compartmentalized thought, I argue that all definitions of food sovereignty need to be grounded in place. Within Washington and British Columbia food sovereignty can be understood through an overlapping spatial and epistemological contact zone. Across this contact zone, there are general incompatibilities in the food sovereignty movement due to a failure to recognize differences in land-based practices as well as shared geographies. Contentions within the contact zone of food sovereignty are numerous, yet if addressed through cross-cultural dialogue many of these points of contentions may be addressed. A precondition to understanding Food Sovereignty within the context of a region is recognition of the particular land-based practices of that place.

⁵⁹ Daigle, Interview

With even a small understanding of these spatial practices, allies can make tangible changes in their immediate life, as well as contribute to policy reform to help revitalize these land-based practices. Allies can begin to challenge their own ways of knowing in the world through an understanding of cultural humility, and can expand upon their ways of knowing through learning from Indigenous knowledges. If allies practice within an indigenous framework and follow values that benefit all, relational action can create greater equality in the contact zone of the Food Sovereignty movement. Following principles of respectful engagement safeguards Indigenous knowledges from the risks inherent to cross-cultural sharing⁶⁰.

I would like to conclude with hopefulness. There has always been incredible resiliency on the side of Indigenous peoples to retain their cultures and ways of life even in the face of oppression, dispossession, genocide and cultural destruction. There are almost insurmountable challenges facing Indigenous people, yet they have made astounding efforts to revitalize their traditional lifeways. Some local instances of this are the Nuxalk Food and Nutrition for Health in Bella Coola,⁶¹ the Working Group on Indigenous Food Sovereignty of British Columbia, the Food Sovereignty Program as well as the Diabetes Prevention through Traditional Foods at Northwest Indian College⁶², along with countless other community-driven programs that greatly enhance Indigenous peoples' connection to their culture, food system, and environment.

⁶⁰ To see a more thorough analysis of the risks of Traditional Knowledge sharing, Preston Hardison, Policy Analyst for the Tulalip tribe has created guidelines for safeguarding traditional knowledges. For more information go to: http://www4.nau.edu/tribalclimatechange/tribes/tdk_safegrdik.asp

⁶¹ Nancy J. Turner et. al. "The Nuxalk Food and Nutrition Program for Health Revisited" *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Centre for Indigenous Peoples' Nutrition and Environment*, (2013) 177-190. Accessed August 2, 2014.

⁶² For more information on Northwest Indian College's Traditional Food and Food Sovereignty programs, go to <http://www.nwic.edu/content/traditional-plants>

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Interview Transcript

Michelle Daigle: 08/15/14

HALLS: Can you describe your research? What are you currently working on for your dissertation?

DAIGLE: My background is more in Indigenous Governance, as that is what my Master's is in. I've really been, for the past several years looking at how sovereignty and self-determination is conceptualized and also enacted for indigenous people, mostly in Canada but also in the United States, through state institutions or in Canadian government, or even in how the International Declaration on Indigenous Rights of Peoples of the United Nations. I've been looking at these different governing institutions and how they have conceptualized self-determination and sovereignty; of course, in partnership with Indigenous people, it is a particular kind of (in my view) the segment of the whole community. A lot of my work has been to deconstruct these pathways, and look at how they perpetuate colonial power dynamics.

HALLS: That's one subject that I've been trying to work on communicating. Can you elaborate on that at all?

DAIGLE: In Canada, at least in our communities where I come from, we have a Band Council System. To put it in a simple way it is similar to a Municipal style government in the

neighboring county from our reserve that is being implemented within our community; there's a head chief, and then there's band council members. The head chief is kind of like a major, and the band council members are like council members. This was imposed on our communities and it is a very different way of governing, in terms of political decision-making. Where I come we have a clan-ship system and so, before we had that a lot of our governance was based on the clan system, and I can maybe give you some readings on that to understand it a little better. It's a very different way of coming about decisions, when a lot of our decisions came about throughout time. Its rational consensus decision making, deliberate justice; a lot of the ways of coming about decision making are very different to how they were done in the clan system. And also, the ceremony, and more spiritual aspect of that was taken out of this process as well.

HALLS: I guess what I didn't realize is that these colonial forces are both internal and external-well, internally imposed.

DAIGLE: So there's that, and then there's also the issue of identity, and how in Canada and the US, as well as internationally, governments have implemented and determined who is native. In Canada, for example, we have First Nations and Inuit Métis, and these are categories that were imposed by the government, this is not how we identify ourselves. We identified ourselves as Cree and Anishinaabe, and it was a very different way of thinking about identity. In the States you have blood quantum, or what percentage of ancestry you have, and in Canada there is also this. For example, when my mom married my dad, who is white, she lost her status. She was able to amend it in, what I think was 1985. So there is all of these policies that are put in place where we do not have ownership on how we determine who is Cree, and who is part of this. If you really look at that system, in Canada, which is the more familiar case that I know of, the goal of

that status non-status system is to eventually have a bunch of non-status Indians who don't have the rights that are associated with being a status Indian.

HALLS: So you're thinking of this particularly in the context of food sovereignty?

DAIGLE: So this is just more of my background. Thinking about how, within this whole context, Canadian government has offered particular ways of thinking about sovereignty; so self-government packages, for example, or treaties or different economic develop packages are being offered from, say, the mining industry from where I come from. There are these different pathways that frame, this is the way of you coming more sovereign, and economically stable community. That's very different from how it's framed from within our communities, in our own teachings. A lot of my work deals what sovereignty or self-determination mean for communities and how can we implement that. How are communities enacting that on an everyday basis, and how does that look different from what we are doing with the Band Council System. Idle No More, or the Oka Crisis, these are bigger social movements that are really good examples of this. There is also the process from within many families and communities that are trying to revitalize ceremony, language, land-based practices including food practices. So that's how I've come to think about self-determination. And a lot of it has been rooted in the language; I think I talked to you about this a bit before. A lot of my learning has been asking elders, how do we express this within our language, or in your language, if it is someone from a different Nation. It's a never ending process, I learned how to express [food sovereignty] in Cree, probably five years ago, and I'm still learning about it. These teachings that were taught, it's not like you can just learn once and you know, they are ever evolving and we are always learning. This comes back to stories, and the reason why stories were told every year. Some stories are told every winter, and it's maybe not told in the exact same way verbatim, and everyone is going to have a different

relationship to that story. For example, if an elder is telling us a story, we are both going to have you're going to have a different relationship than I will, but we both going to walk away with having learned something. Sorry, that was kind of a bit off-track (Laughs).

HALLS: (Laughing) No, it isn't.

DAIGLE: So that's how I've come to think about self-determination, and more recently in my work, I've been thinking about how our food practices are part of that larger process of self-determination. I'm looking at how native communities are trying to bring those back. I'm focusing on specifically on indigenous food sovereignty; that's a coined term that people are familiar with; indigenous food sovereignty in Anishinaabe communities, in what is now known as the Treaty Three Territory.

HALLS: I appreciate what you are talking about because I've been experiencing in my research how decontextualized food sovereignty is in the literature I'm reading.

DAIGLE: Can you say more about that?

HALLS: I'm realizing more what I'm trying to do in this paper, even though it is a small effort, is break down dominant dialogue, which I've noticed within food sovereignty and open up dialogue to multiple perspectives on food sovereignty.

DAIGLE: Well, there is a really great issue that just came out in the Journal of Peasant Studies...it's a double issue, and one of them is all about food sovereignty. There are a lot of great articles in that and I think that, what you are talking about with food sovereignty being decontextualized, a lot of the authors are talking about how the food sovereignty movement and the literature on this movement- those are two separate things- have really focused on global movements. Now people are saying that we really need to understand how food sovereignty is shaped within place, and over time. Food Sovereignty, as you know, really became popular in

the mid-nineties, but that was now, 20 years ago, so a lot of changes have happened. What food sovereignty is going to look like in say, Bolivia, is going to be different for Anishinaabe people, in say, Treaty Three territories. Not to say that there isn't something to be learned from both experiences, that could perhaps be incorporated in culturally relevant ways, but there are all these things you have to consider. First and foremost, you have to consider the culture that's there. And also, colonialism has taken shape in different ways, so there is a lot. People are also talking about different identity politics- it becomes very complicated.

HALLS: So how do you see your work right now to be part of this?

DAIGLE: Part of it? Well, I struggle because... (pause) this research first and foremost is for the communities that I'm working with and for indigenous communities in general. So I'm thinking about what the community wants, and the people I'm working with, they are just happy and thankful that I'm working with them so that I'm able to learn certain things, and either just as an individual that is able to carry that knowledge on, to be able to pass that on in the community member, but also being able to write about it. There is a lot of debate about this; there are some things that should never be written, so that is something that I am constantly navigating, and looking for guidance on. So there's that and then I'm having to make an intervention in this literature on food sovereignty. Within this literature, I'm having to insert this indigenous perspective, and when you're talking about indigenous food sovereignty, it's been so much about the global food economy, this neoliberal, globalization of industrial agriculture. But when I think about the Anishinaabe people, it has to do a lot more with a colonial history. Even though there is a colonial aspect to the global food economy, the way that I'm going to approach it is going to be a little different to what I've seen so far in the food sovereignty literature. So the fact that land dispossession, the outlawing of our ceremonies, residential schools have occurred. This has all

had a severe impact on our relationship to our food practices. I am looking at these more closely, and looking at how this colonial violence continues today, through natural resource extraction industry. This is where it becomes interesting, because there is a divide in the community, and there are some leaders that are really for this kind of economic development that is often tied to resource extraction. And then there are other people in the community who are very much against it because they see the long term impacts that it's going to have on our people. I'm talking through how these politics still continue, this colonial violence, although it doesn't look like what it looked like maybe a few hundred years ago. It's taking a different shape, and it's important to deconstruct that and to have those conversations. People in the community are not always happy (laughs) when someone speaks out against those issues, but you know, it's important to do that. So there is the colonial aspect, and then there is also market-oriented literature. Even though people are trying to move away from a global food economy in discussions [food sovereignty] is very much market-oriented, (pauses) this is the best way I can express it—it's seeing food more as a commodity. There are some really good pieces out there, for example Dawn Morrison's piece is probably the best piece out there for thinking about indigenous communities. There are also some pieces coming out from Latin America where people are talking about the cultural meaning, the spiritual meaning, about our food and different food practices. Even the word food...at one point when I was interviewing people food didn't seem like an adequate word, at the end of the day a lot of elders were talking about trapping, so they would talk about the beaver, and the significance of the beaver. In our stories or that our clanship system is based on the beaver, and it's something much more than that, and that is where the cultural and spiritual piece comes in. (Pause) Another thing is honoring our highly sophisticated indigenous science that exists in our community. There are people within our

communities that have an intimate, very intimate relationship with the land since they were really young. They were six, seven years old going out on the trap line with their dads, brothers, sisters, grandpas, grandmas, uncles and aunties, this is something they have done their whole lives. Some of them have maintained that; they still go out trapping every winter, but they have jobs now, and some of them have full-time jobs and some of them can't go trapping as much anymore. A lot of these people that I talk to it was very obvious to me that they have this intimate knowledge of the ecosystem. You know, I'm not a scientist so I'm not able to articulate it well enough. It's being able to acknowledge that there is a lot of knowledge there, and sometimes it gets me when you see these partnership projects and its Western science coming together with traditional ecological knowledge, our traditional knowledge. And I get it, I get what they are saying, but it's almost still like there's a hierarchy there. So this is also a science, and it's just as valid, and it's not like one is better than the other, but its more that they need to be in dialogue, in a true dialogue.

HALLS: Yeah, I think there's this idea that traditional ecological knowledge can just be encapsulated within institutional science, and I don't think it's really respectful.

DAIGLE: Yeah.

HALLS: I really appreciate what you are saying. It's really my long-term goal, figuring out how research can be rooted in community...

HALLS: One more question I have is how you feel about being in between these teachings from your community and the institutional setting. How do you navigate that in both places?

DAIGLE: Ok. (Pause) It's something that I constantly struggle with and that I'm still learning. It's something that I've also felt really guilty about being here. I moved away from home about eight or nine years ago, and a lot of my growth and a lot of me becoming interested in a lot of the

aspects such as self-determination has been while I've been really far away from home. You're far away from home and you're on other people's land and it's very different here; the coastal culture, than what's at home. I guess I've struggled with how do I balance what I'm doing, what my accountabilities are, as a PhD Student that's trying to get her degree, and trying to make a career with it in academia. This, versus the accountabilities I have within the communities. Just with this project in particular, I came to a point this last year thinking should I just move home and just learn, you know go out trapping, and totally immerse myself in this. And even to learn the language, I've done some online classes in the past year but it still isn't the same as being able to converse with people on an everyday basis. Or being mentored by an elder is very different than learning a language in the classroom. They're taught two very different ways, and it's almost like in the classroom it's more of a western way of teaching it. A lot of it is being committed to go home, going home at certain times of the year when there are important things going on in the community. A big part of it is being able to spend time with my grandma, that's a big thing for me, just being able to go home and hang out with my grandma for a couple weeks. Also, I'm trying to build relationships with people here; I think that's also important. And that's really difficult and... (pause) that's something I struggle with too because I don't know how long I'll be in Seattle, because who knows where the short term future is going to bring me. So, I tread that lightly, because there's...you want to be part of the community but you want to be respectful as well. So you know, it's just being able to go to different community events, and support what's going on here. As a graduate student, as part of the food symposium⁶³ we are really committed to bringing in community members and part of the goal of that symposium is to bring these communities together so that they can all learn what is going on in each of their

⁶³ The University of Washington Traditional Foods and Environmental Knowledge Symposium, which will occur September 26-27, 2014

communities. Maybe they can incorporate some of the projects within their own communities; maybe they can build some kind of alliances. It's all about bringing people together.

HALLS: Is it that you feel like it might not be a long-term engagement and thus you are hesitant?

DAIGLE: For me, I am a little bit hesitant and I think it's because (pause)...the best way I can say it is that if I was far away from home and still with Cree people, or still with Anishinaabe people, because my community has both and I have relations with both, it's the familiarity of that culture, of the language, of the ceremonies. I think because it is a little bit different, I just want to make sure. I'm not as familiar with the protocols. I'm very careful to kind of not overstep my boundaries. And so how do I negotiate that? Negotiating that at home, I really have to put that academic jargon away. Were so trained and disciplined to think that we are the experts on something, we disciplined to debate...a graduate seminar is filled with ego (laughs). When I'm in the community it's completely different. And you know, I try to be that way in this space too. But, I really learned in the community that it isn't about me coming in and being like "this is my project" and trying to articulate it in a certain way. Instead, its "I want to learn about traditional food practices, I just want to learn from you" and offering my tobacco and just telling them yes, this is what I'm doing in school but this is part of a larger process for me, in a way.

HALLS: I kind of see this in a way of carrying knowledges, so once you've completed your dissertation do you give it to your family, do you try to make it as approachable as possible so that everyone can read it?

DAIGLE: So for my thesis, I was committed to writing something that would be more approachable to my community. For my dissertation, it's a whole other thing now, and so it has to be written a certain way. So what I've talked about with people in the community is that first of all, anyone who wants a copy of their interview transcription is able to look over it and make

any changes. Also, if I'm directing people on something that is a little more sensitive, I'm sending drafts of my chapters to certain people of my community to make sure I'm being respectful and that I'm not violating any sort of protocols by putting it in print, certain things that were shared with me. So, there's that piece, and they will have a copy of that. I've also been talking to people about what I can do to give back. One thing I'll probably have for everyone is a feast, just to feast the paper, and to thank them. Other things are contributing to the fall harvest, just being able to go and help out with certain things during the year. Another project that we are thinking about is creating some sort of cookbook, but I'm still talking about this with a few people. So there's something I'm going to be able to give back that isn't a dissertation. There are certain expectations, so I do have to write my dissertation a certain way, and you know maybe one, two people of the community will read it. But at the end of the day, I think it's more about the process, and the commitment that you are making. That means a lot more than giving a three hundred page document to them. The cookbook is pretty exciting though, I'm envisioning it being not just a cookbook but also how different parts of different animals are used for medicines, for example, or even incorporating the storytelling to go with the different recipes. Where did that recipe come from? So that something I was talking about with one of the elders.

HALLS: That's exciting! So this kind of melds into what you were saying, but particularly as a researcher, what are some principles you practice to be respectful?

DAIGLE: Well, I always offer people tobacco, whenever I ask them something. The tobacco offering signifies that I am accepting a responsibility by asking an Elder or Knowledge Holder for help and insight. In that exchange I am saying that I will carry that knowledge and share in a respectful way and reflect on how I can embody that teaching in my life. I always just try to practice my aural skills, and my patience. The

teaching of patience has been the more difficult one for me, just because my nature is not to be the most patient person, and also the academic process doesn't always allow for that. Also I feel I've been committed to incorporating the language in order to be as true to knowledge that comes from my community or other communities that have been shared with me. This goes back to classic anthropology, but I see it now from contemporary non-indigenous scholars, where that knowledge is not being honored, because it's sometimes being fit to another framework or a theory. Not to say that those two cannot come into conversation, but what I strive for is to create more of a dialogue than to make indigenous knowledge fit into something that has already been recognized, or is considered esteemed knowledge. And it's really difficult; it's a constant struggle for me, being able to articulate that in a graduate seminar, or in a research cluster, and also to be able to write that down on paper. It's not easy, but it's something that I'm committed to doing in my work.

Postscript

Over the span the summer I researched and wrote this paper, I was helping to design and implement a summer program for American Indian and Alaskan Native middle school students called the *Native Youth Enrichment Program*. The theme of the program was “LIFE: Lessons in Indigenous Foods and the Environment.” Facilitating this program allowed me explore institutional as well as traditional pathways to health and wellness within individuals, communities, and environments. Our mission was “to develop traditional foods and diabetes ambassadors that will educate themselves, families and communities by providing information and strategies to be addressed by working in partnership.”⁶⁴ This is a form of “sharing the knowledge-” both traditional knowledges as well as scientific knowledge relating to health and wellness. This opportunity to be able to do research alongside community-based participation has allowed me to be very passionate about my work since I am able to see its immediate relevance and, hopefully, its importance. NYEP was an amazing learning experience for me, and I intend to continue with community relations work, both in my work and my studies.

⁶⁴ NYEP Misson Statement. To learn more, visit <http://youth.iwri.org/>

One of the moments of cross-cultural mentorship that has stood out to me was a conversation I had with my mentor at the University of Washington, Polly Olsen. Polly told me a story called “The Klickitat Basket” that helped me understand a cultural teaching. The story begins with a young girl who is not adept within her learning environment:

A long time ago there was a girl. Her thoughts were slow, her fingers clumsy. She could not keep up with the other children, so each day she sat in the shade of an ancient cedar tree. From beneath its sheltering branches she would watch the other children laugh and play. The cedar tree felt sorry for her. "Little Sister, do you want to learn something new, something important?"

A while back I wanted to learn how to harvest inner cedar bark. I went to collect cedar for out in Black Diamond, Washington in a forest that was awaiting imminent removal for the construction of a suburban development. I went up to a medium-sized cedar tree and tried to make the first gash into the inner bark. I cut into the tree and began trying to wedge my adze into the inner bark:

No one had ever bothered to try to teach the girl anything. "Oh, yes! Please teach me..." The cedar tree teaches the girl to use its tender roots to weave the first cedar basket in the world. It requires patience and determination before she can make a basket that will hold water. When she succeeds, the tree tells her that now she must make it beautiful. "I don't know any designs. I am...too slow."

I later felt guilty for engaging in a traditional practice and not following traditional protocols, which was honoring the tree before I harvested cedar from it. Later, I would press yellow pollen into the bark of a cedar tree to honor the tree for the gift it had given me. After cutting into the bark, I eventually was able to get my hands around the loosened inner bark and began to tug a strip off the trunk of the cedar. I gently pulled the strip off the tree, and by the time that the strip fell, it was about fifteen feet long. I began pulling the inner bark from the cedar bark strip, but I

was humbled by my efforts. I got nothing but short strips, which Polly told me later was good, because then I could share the cedar with others for teachings.

"The Creator has given you many patterns to choose from. You can see them in the mountains, the rivers, the footprints of birds..."

"I can't," thought the girl. But the cedar tree had so much faith in her. "I will try," she said.

She succeeds, and the cedar tree tells her to give her basket to the oldest woman in the village.

"But I worked so hard..."

"This is how it shall be, Little Sister," said the cedar tree. "You must share your gift with others."

So she did. How good she felt to have a gift to give, and how grateful were her people. Even today the Klickitat are famous for their weaving of cedar baskets. And tradition still tells them that their first accomplishments are to be celebrated by the giving of those gifts to the elders of their village...

I was able to bring these strips of cedar to make a cedar weaving with youth. This teaching also broke down some boundaries of my own thinking. It is an Indigenous belief that one can learn teaching from the earth, from our non-human relations. This form of teaching can transcend barriers of thinking, and has both an ancestral and timeless presence. When Polly told this story, it was a transmission of knowledge, which is constitutive to a larger network of learning connecting me to youth, elders, and the greater community.